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Student 'sheiks' arrested

By Martha Brannigan

Staff Writer

Two college students posed as CIA agents impersonating Arab sheiks to win millions in credit from the Pan American Bank, federal officials said.

But the scam ended Thursday when FBI agents arrested the 19-year-old Broward men and charged them with bank fraud and impersonation.

Alexander Louis Medina of 1142 N. Federal Highway, Dania, and James J. Remite of Hillsboro Beach were expected to go before a U.S. magistrate in Miami today for an initial hearing on the charges. If convicted, the University of Florida students could face jail for 13 years.

The teens contacted international bank officers in Miami last week, saying they needed \$200 million in credit for an operation they were carrying out for the CIA similar to Abscam, the FBI said.

But bankers were suspicious of the deal and checked it out immediately with the FBI.

The FBI contacted the CIA and found out no such operation was under way, according to FBI spokesman Welton Merry.

FBI agents then decided to go along with the pair and posed as bankers to find out the students' plans, Merry said.

At a meeting at a Miami hotel Thursday, the students, clad in business suits, told the "bankers" details of their undercover operation and flashed identification of themselves as sheiks clad in Arabia attire and headress, Merry said.

After the students made clear their intentions, the FBI pulled the cover off the students' scam and took them to the Dade County Jail.

In Abscam, FBI agents posed as Arab sheiks willing to pay for favors from congressman.

The students, in addition to possible prison terms, could face fines totaling \$11,000 for their attempted operation, Merry said.